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ARIE DEGABLI  
3973 WALTERS AVENUE  
NORTHBROOK IL, 60062

**MAILED**

JUN 04 2012

**OFFICE OF PETITIONS**

**ON PETITION**

In re Patent of :  
ARIE DEGABLI :  
Patent No.: 6,367,154 :  
Issue Date: 04/09/2002 :  
Application No. 09/270151 :  
Filing or 371(c) Date: 03/16/1999 :  
Title of Invention: :  
COMBINATION UTILITY KNIFE :

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR § 1.378(b), filed April 18, 2012, to reinstate the above-identified patent.

The petitions are **DISMISSED**.

Any further petition to revive the above-identified application must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137." This is **not** final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

**Background**

The patent issued April 9, 2002. Patentee could have paid the seven and one half (7½) year maintenance fee between April 9, 2009, and October 9, 2009, without a surcharge, or within the six (6) month grace period between October 10, 2009 and April 9, 2010. Patentee failed to do so; accordingly, the patent became expired on April 10, 2010.

**The present petition**

Patentee files the present petition and provides that payment of the seven and one half (7½) year maintenance fee was unavoidably delayed because the address that was on file with this Office changed sometime in 2005. Patentee provides that a forwarding mail request was in place but it had expired.

**Applicable Law, Rules and MPEP****Petition to reinstate under 37 CFR 1.378(b)**

37 CFR 1.378(b) provides that a patent may be reinstated at any time following expiration of the patent for failure to timely pay a maintenance fee. A petition to accept late payment of a maintenance fee, where the delay was unavoidable, must include:

- (A) the required maintenance fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(e)-(g);
- (B) the surcharge set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(i)(1); and
- (C) a showing that the delay was unavoidable since reasonable care was taken to ensure that the maintenance fee would be paid timely and that the petition was filed promptly after the patentee was notified of, or otherwise became aware of, the expiration of the patent.

The applicable law requires a showing that the delay in paying the maintenance fee was unavoidable despite reasonable care being taken to ensure that the maintenance fee would be timely paid. The required showing must enumerate the steps taken to ensure timely payment of the maintenance fee, the date and the manner in which patentee became aware of the expiration of the patent, and the steps taken to file the petition promptly. Furthermore, an adequate showing requires a statement by all persons with direct knowledge of the cause of the delay, setting forth the facts as they know them. Copies of all documentary evidence referred to in a statement should be furnished as exhibits to the statement. (Emphasis supplied).

As language in 35 U.S.C. § 41(c)(1) is identical to that in 35 U.S.C. § 133 (i.e., “unavoidable” delay), a late maintenance fee for the unavoidable delay standard is considered under the same standard for reviving an abandoned application under 35 U.S.C. § 133. *See Ray v. Lehman*, 55 F.3d 606, 608-09, 34 USPQ2d 1786, 1787 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (quoting *In re Patent No. 4,409,763*, 7 USPQ2d 1798, 1800 (Comm’r Pat. 1988), *aff’d sub nom. Rydeen v. Quigg*, 748 F. Supp. 900, 16 USPQ2d 1876 (D.D.C. 1990), *aff’d*, 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir. 1991) (table), *cert. denied*, 502 U.S. 1075 (1992)). See MPEP § 711.03(c) for a general discussion of the “unavoidable” delay standard.

Because 35 U.S.C. § 41(c) requires the payment of fees at specified intervals to maintain a patent in force, rather than some response to a specific action by the Office under 35 U.S.C. § 133, a reasonably prudent person in the exercise of due care and diligence would have taken steps to ensure the timely payment of such maintenance fees. *Ray*, 55 F.3d at 609, 34 USPQ2d at 1788. That is, an adequate showing that the delay in payment of the maintenance fee at issue was “unavoidable” within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(c) and 37 CFR 1.378(b)(3) requires a showing of the steps taken to ensure the timely payment of the maintenance fees for this patent. *Id.* Thus, where the record fails to disclose that the patentee took reasonable steps, or discloses that the patentee took no steps, to ensure timely payment of the maintenance fee, 35 U.S.C. 41(c) and 37 CFR 1.378(b)(3) preclude acceptance of the delayed payment of the maintenance fee under 37 CFR 1.378(b).

In view of the requirement to enumerate the steps taken to ensure timely payment of the maintenance fee, the patentee’s lack of knowledge of the need to pay the maintenance fee

and the failure to receive the Maintenance Fee Reminder do not constitute unavoidable delay. See Patent No. 4,409,763, supra. See also Final Rule entitled "*Final Rules for Patent Maintenance Fees*," published in the *Federal Register* at 49 Fed. Reg. 34716, 34722-23 (August 31, 1984), and republished in the *Official Gazette* at 1046 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 28, 34 (September 25, 1984). Under the statutes and rules, the Office has no duty to notify patentees of the requirement to pay maintenance fees or to notify patentees when the maintenance fees are due. It is solely the responsibility of the patentee to assure that the maintenance fee is timely paid to prevent expiration of the patent. The lack of knowledge of the requirement to pay a maintenance fee and the failure to receive the Maintenance Fee Reminder will not shift the burden of monitoring the time for paying a maintenance fee from the patentee to the Office. Thus, evidence that despite reasonable care on behalf of the patentee and/or the patentee's agents, and reasonable steps to ensure timely payment, the maintenance fee was unavoidably not paid, could be submitted in support of an argument that the delay in payment was unavoidable.

Moreover, the Patent and Trademark Office must rely on the actions or inactions of duly authorized and voluntarily chosen representatives of the applicant, and applicant is bound by the consequences of those actions or inactions. Link v. Wabash, 370 U.S. 626, 633-34 (1962); Huston v. Ladner, 973 F.2d 1564, 1567, 23 USPQ2d 1910, 1913 (Fed. Cir. 1992); see also Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 317, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1132 (D.N. Ind. 1987). Specifically, petitioner's delay caused by the actions or inactions of his voluntarily chosen representative does not constitute unavoidable delay within the meaning of 35 USC 133 or 37 CFR 1.137(a). Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 5 USPQ2d 1130 (D. Ind. 1987); Smith v. Diamond, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); Potter v. Dann, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); Ex parte Murray, 1891 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 130, 131 (Comm'r Pat. 1891). In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (1912)(quoting Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also Winkler v. Ladd, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 167-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913).

### Opinion

Patentee files the present petition and provides that payment of the seven and one half (7½) year maintenance fee was unavoidably delayed because the address that was on file with this Office changed sometime in 2005. Patentee provides that a forwarding mail request was in place but it had expired. Initially it is noted that the law requires a showing of the steps taken to ensure the timely payment of the maintenance fees for this patent. Here, Patentee was unaware of the need to pay the maintenance fee and has not demonstrated that any steps were taken to ensure timely payment of the maintenance fee. Moreover, the patentee's lack of knowledge of the need to pay the maintenance fee and the failure to receive the Maintenance Fee Reminders does not constitute unavoidable delay.

Further to this, as stated above, it is solely the responsibility of the patentee to assure that the maintenance fee is timely paid to prevent expiration of the patent. Here, Patentee provides only that payment of the seven and one half (7½) year maintenance fee was unavoidably delayed because the address that was on file with this Office changed sometime in 2005. As stated above, where the record fails to disclose that the patentee took reasonable steps, or discloses that the patentee took no steps, to ensure timely payment of the maintenance fee, 35 U.S.C. 41(c) and 37 CFR 1.378(b)(3) preclude acceptance of the delayed payment of the maintenance fee under 37 CFR 1.378(b).

## Conclusion

Petitioner's arguments have been considered; however, Petitioner has failed to demonstrate that the failure to pay the maintenance fee was unavoidable. The petition is dismissed.

### Petitioner's current options

#### I. Petitioner may file a request for reconsideration.

If reconsideration of this decision is desired, a petition for reconsideration must be filed within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. The petition for reconsideration should be entitled "Petition for Reconsideration under 37 CFR 1.378(b)." Any petition for reconsideration of this decision must be accompanied by a non-refundable petition fee of \$400 as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(h).

*After a decision on the petition for reconsideration, no further reconsideration or review of the matter will be undertaken by the Commissioner.* Therefore, it is extremely important that petitioner supply **any** and **all** relevant information and documentation with his request for reconsideration. The Commissioner's decision will be based solely on the administrative record in existence. Petitioner should remember that it is not enough that the delay was unavoidable; petitioner must **prove** that the delay was unavoidable. A petition will not be granted if petitioner provides insufficient evidence to 'show' that the delay was unavoidable. Therefore, if a request for reconsideration is filed, it must establish that the entire delay in the submission of the maintenance fee was unavoidable.

#### II. Petitioner may request a refund of the maintenance fee and surcharge which accompanied the petition.

Petitioner may request a refund of the maintenance fee and surcharge by writing to the Office of Finance, Refund Section, Commissioner for Patents, Washington, DC, 20231. A copy of this decision should accompany petitioner's request.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail:                      Mail Stop PETITIONS  
                                    Director for Patents  
                                    PO Box 1450  
                                    Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By FAX:                      (571) 273-8300  
                                    Attn: Office of Petitions

By hand:                      Customer Service Window  
                                    Randolph Building  
                                    401 Dulany Street  
                                    Alexandria, VA 22314

Telephone inquiries concerning *this matter* should be directed to attorney Derek Woods at (571) 272-3232<sup>1</sup>.

/DLW/

Derek L. Woods  
Attorney  
Office of Petitions

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<sup>1</sup> Petitioner will note that all practice before the Office should be in writing, and the action of the Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. See, 37 CFR 1.2. As such, Petitioner is reminded that no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Petitioner's further action(s).